

Need for Digitization in Academic Libraries

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Abstract – The paper discusses about circumstances, environment and benefits that compel digitization of academic libraries due to the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). It also highlights its challenges for converting traditional library resources to digital format.

Keywords: Academic Libraries, Library Resources, Digitization.

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INTRODUCTION

Society of today has become a networked society in which all spheres of human activity has been used extensively to record, store and disseminate the information in a digital format by using ICT. Due to the changes in ICT the world has been converted into a global village. As such, the traditional role of the library as a simply place of storage and preservation of books and other information materials has changed overwhelmingly since the advent of information and Communication technology (ICT) and also changing its services rapidly so as to meet the changing needs of the library users. The concept of library is therefore needs to be upgraded to digital library so as to accommodate rapid development of e-resources. Academic libraries are duly bound to acquire, preserve and disseminate information for whatever source, there is a need for such sources of information to be kept preserved and made available in a more convenient and accessible format.

DIGITAL ACADEMIC LIBRARIES:

A well-established library is essential for any academic institution. It is expected that academic library should provide relevant information resources for teaching, learning and research. Digital technology has changed not only the way information is packaged, processed, stored, disseminated but also how users seek and access information. Academic library no longer restrict themselves to provide traditional library services but they are more inclined to provide services in digital form that led to digitization of their resources. Academic libraries presently are faced with relevancy in the digital era focusing repositioning of academic library resources, operations, services and skills. Resources today are in digital form so that professionals of academic libraries are facing challenges of digital libraries.

DIGITAL LIBRARY:

A digital library is a library that contains materials in digitized form and is an organized collection of multimedia and other types of resources under which digital library resources are available in digital form and accessible worldwide.

NEED FOR DIGITIZATION:

With the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as well as growing e-resources it has become imperative for academic library professionals to redefine their role in disseminating varied information to the users. Digitization of library resources is needed to provide quality-based service at the user doorsteps and digitization of academic library resources is essential to handle the problem of information explosion. More and more information are going to publish over Internet. Digitization of academic library resources is needed to procure the online publication and to provide link to important sources of information. As the digitized resources of the library can be accessed from remote places and at any time of difficult situation digitization of academic library resources is so needed for researchers, intellectuals, students, etc.

Academic libraries are now responding to global changes by adopting digitization of their resources and Institutional repositories of the Institutions. Digitalization being one of the important aspects of current global trends aims at effective information dissemination, preservation of information resources and facilitating the integration of library services into the learning process of academic Institutions. It also makes library's resources available electronically resulting to the fact that users can access the digitized library resources from their remote places even when library is physically closed.

PROCESS OF DIGITIZATION:

The setting of digitization entails the following stages:
Policy enactment: The top management should enact a policy by legislation for successful digitization process.

Policy approval: The policy for digitization should be approved by the appropriate authority and implemented. For Instance, digitization of a College library needs the approval of the College Management and other funding agencies.

Planning, budgeting and monitoring: It is essential that a Planning Committee be constituted to prepare plans and budgets for digitization. Budget for the project may include salary, wages, training expenses, equipments, legal fees, maintenance as well as contingencies, etc.

Procurement of appropriate technology: Technology here refers to all hardware/software needed.

Sensitization, psychological preparation and re-training of staff: It is a common thing for people to resist change just of fear of the unawareness of the new technology and affecting their jobs adversely. The library management therefore is responsible to educate the staff about the benefits of the digitization.

Legal issues: One of the most important selection criteria for digitization will be the copyright status of the original materials. The library should look into the matter pertaining to the legal /Copyright issues.

Selection criteria: Selection criteria involves value, significance of the overall collections, Users demand and interest, availability of the original.

Verification: Having selected materials for digitization, the next step is to verify or ascertain whether digital copies of such materials already exist so as to avoid duplication.

Metadata: Metadata helps to identify the work that creates it, migrated or reformatted it and other descriptive information's. It provides unique identifying information about the organization's file and databases.

Benefits of digitization in academic libraries:
 Benefits of digitization in academic libraries may be summarised:

- 1) The obvious benefit of digitization is that it enables greater access to collections of all types.
- 2) Digitization creates accessibility to research findings, improves access to research work, reports and other intellectual content.
- 3) Digitization improves access to library resources and also creates visibility not only of

the library's content but the scholar's works within the higher institution of learning.

- 4) It also saves the time of users due to the fact that a large number of library users can access a single material at the same time.
- 5) Digitized documents of academic library can be accessed 24X7 from anywhere which provides library without walls.
- 6) Whereas traditional libraries are limited by space for storage digital libraries have the potential to store much more information as digital information requires little space
- 7) The cost for maintaining digital libraries is much lower than that of traditional libraries
- 8) Digitization of an academic library provides user friendly interfaces and also provides clickable access to its resources.

Problems of digitization in academic libraries:

- 1) *Lack of proper direction:* No proper direction from the management for digitization of academic libraries leading to negligence of it.
- 2) *Lack of technical training:* The Library Professionals require technical training for effective digitization and there is a lack of such training.
- 3) *Lack of needed infrastructure:* Most of the academic libraries have poor infrastructure which are needed for digitization.
- 4) *Lack of staff input:* Most of the academic libraries are managed by under-staff resulting to problem of smooth and effective digitization
- 5) *Lack of support from management:* There is no proper support from the management for digitization of academic libraries.
- 6) *Lack of long-range planning:* Many of the Institutions have not set for long-range planning for future development that brings in the problem of digitization of academic libraries.

CHALLENGES FOR LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS:

Digitization of academic library leads to changing role of the library professionals. The library professionals should play role of hypertext engineers because they are responsible for

packaging and repackaging of information for electronic publishing, etc.

The new environment requires a new technical set of competencies for library professionals which were not required in the traditional library. A technical skill is an important responsibility of library professionals. Library professionals should be able to accommodate with characteristics of the digital library that is rapidly changing and evolving nature of the environment, The environment is subject to immense change quickly and a key role of the library professionals in the future will be the ability to adapt and to work effectively in such an environment.

CONCLUSION

The need for digitization in an academic library has become an important task for the academic library professionals which brings the resources of library nearer to the benefit of users. The information explosion, searching problems in traditional libraries, low cost of technology, environment factor and new generation needs are the factors that compel need for digitization in academic libraries. Digitization creates new ways to search and access library content and a step forward leading to better quality of library services.

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